

## **DRAFT MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 8, 2011**

### **MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Members Present:** Erwin Mack, Chair; David Anspacher, MNCPPC; Ramin Assa; Captain Thomas Didone; Darrel Droblich; Steve Friedman; Alan Migdall; Colleen Mitchell, Vice Chair via speaker phone; Alyce Ortuzar; Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring RSC; Richard Romer representing Councilmember Ervin; Jack Strausman; Al Roshdieh representing Arthur Holmes, MCDOT

**Members Absent:** John Britton, Municipal League; Peter Moe, MSHA; David Sharp;

**County Staff:** Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, MCDOT; Tom Pogue, MCDOT; Fred Lees, MCDOT-DTEO; Nadji Kirby, MCDOT-SRTS; Joana Conklin, MCDOT

**Guests:** Bernard Holloway, Prince George's CountyStat; Adam Ortiz, Prince George's CountyStat; Gabriel McConnell, Prince George's CountyStat; Lisa Choplin, MSHA; Richard Hoyer; Jason Quan, KFH Group; Lee Winestone, KFH Group; David Stinchcomb; Angel Garcia-Ablanque, MPCs to replace James D'Andrea; William Smith

#### **Pre-meeting Showing of Innovative Bicycle Facilities Video by Steve Friedman**

##### **1. Committee Business:**

Chairman Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm. A video of innovative bicycle facilities in Europe had been shown by Steve Friedman prior to the beginning of the meeting. The minutes of the July meeting were introduced.

**ACTION:** The committee moved to approve the July, 2011 minutes; approved unanimously.

**Membership Selection and Appointments:** Jeff Dunckel explained the process of appointments and reappointments. Four new candidates had applied, along with the existing members who were eligible having reapplied. Colleen Mitchell will be unable to participate in the interviews. Another committee member who is not up for reappointment will now need to be selected. The County Council did approve Erwin Mack's request for an exception to the two term limit; his reappointment to a third term and to serve as Chairman were approved by the Council in July. James D'Andrea has submitted his resignation from the PTSAC; Angel Garcia-Ablanque will be replacing him as the MCPS representative. Garcia- Ablanque is the Assistant Director of Transportation at MCPS.

**ACTION:** The new candidates will be interviewed and the recommended candidates submitted for approval prior to the next PTSAC meeting.

**PTSAC Reauthorization:** The PTSAC has a sunset provision of August 31, 2012 in the legislation that authorizes the committee. Council President Valerie Ervin and Councilmember Roger Berliner are introducing legislation that will remove the sunset provision and will add "bicycle" to the name of the PTSAC: the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. The legislation is scheduled for a work session on October 17 - - which is the same day the Council will be briefed in their annual review of the Pedestrian Safety Program. No other changes to the committee are being proposed; the term bicycle is being added to more accurately reflect what the committee is already doing.

**CountyStat Presentation:** Dunckel provided an overview of what was presented in the CountyStat review on August 26, 2011. These reviews occur every six to nine months. Data is reviewed to determine the effectiveness of the program as it is being implemented. This was the eighth such review. This was the first time the County was able to see some results in collision data from measures that were now being implemented. Looking at the pedestrian collisions numbers that were compiled through June, 2011, pedestrian collisions numbers are now down. The number of fatalities at the mid-year point are down, and the percentage of collisions resulting in severe injuries (incapacitated or fatal) is at an historic low level. While this is a promising finding, the second half of the year has yet to come – the County is cautiously optimistic. When individual program components were analyzed, each one appears to have had a positive effect of reducing pedestrian collisions: HIAs (56% decline), Safe Routes to Schools (70% decline), Traffic Calming (18% decline).

**Cpt. Didone Report on Collision Statistics:** Didone distributed the mid-year evaluation of pedestrian collisions for 2011. Dunckel noted that pedestrian collision data is now be analyzed much more quickly, helping to steer the program. Alan Migdall noted that over time, recent pedestrian collision numbers seem to change in later reports. Captain Tom Didone explained that data continues to be analyzed and sometimes additional accident reports are identified. Didone

expressed confidence in these latest numbers. He distributed a mid-year report his group had prepared based on these numbers. Migdall cautioned that the report should only report percentages to significant figures; serious collision rates should not be reported to a tenth of a percent. Bicycle data is being compiled separately.

## **2. Sidewalks Program in the State of Maryland – Montgomery County**

Lisa Choplin, MSHA, explained the State's program to build sidewalks, how it is being implemented, and what is taken into account when deciding where and how to build sidewalks. There are two basic components to the State's program: Grants Sponsorship Programs and Systems Preservation Programs. The Systems Preservation Programs include the sidewalks, ADA retrofit and the Pedestrian Access to Transit programs. While other programs may provide for construction, these three focus solely on improving pedestrian safety.

The Systems Preservations are planned, designed and constructed by the State. While local jurisdictions may be involved, generally the State implements the projects:

**Sidewalks Retrofit Program (Annual Budget = \$1.5 Million for entire State):** One of the oldest programs, it builds new sidewalks in designated neighborhoods and priority funding areas. Local government support is required. Montgomery County submits a list of priority locations where the sidewalks should be built. Financial support of local governments is also expected for these projects. Factors that affect selection: priority for local jurisdiction, history of pedestrian collisions, location of pedestrian generators.

**ADA Retrofit Program (Annual Budget = \$8.5 Million for entire State):** The program brings existing sidewalks into ADA compliance. In 2005, an inventory of sidewalks on the entire state roadway system was conducted; this was placed in a GIS Database. While this helps identify projects, it also enables the State to track ADA compliance activities. Input from the public and local governments is used to prioritize projects in this program. Because of the funding, the State is able to cover 100% of the cost of these projects.

**Pedestrian Access to Transit Program – “Fund 78” (Annual Budget - \$5 Million for entire State):** The programs sole purpose is to provide safe pedestrian access to existing transit facilities (bus stops, Metro stations, MARC Stations, etc.) Currently the emphasis has been to focus in providing access to bus stops. Some support of transit-oriented development can be provided as well. Projects are prioritized with feedback from local governments and transit agencies. This is the newest program, with the first funds going out this last year. Focus is on corridors.

Unlike roads, the State only builds pedestrian facilities, but does not maintain them. This is specified in state law. Local jurisdictions are responsible for the maintenance.

Migdall noted that the sidewalk budgets were a very small percentage of the entire transportation budget, stating that pedestrian fatalities for the state are 17% of all traffic fatalities – but the funding is nowhere near 17% of the transportation construction budget. Choplin noted that the budget is a lot more now than it has been in the recent past; pedestrian safety is now a priority for the State.

Ramin Assa asked about the role of these programs in addressing road crossings; Choplin replied that these issues are included in MSHA programs. Assa requested access to the State GIS inventory of sidewalks, performed in 2005. Duncel clarified that the County already has the State inventory database.

## **3. Gray Streets to Green Streets: Incorporating Green Features into Pedestrian Facilities**

Adam Ortiz, Prince George's County Office of the County Executive's CountyStat Office and former Mayor of Edmonston, introduced his team and his work at making streetscape improvements to roads that enhanced environmental quality. He gave a slide presentation of work done. Edmonston is a small community in Prince George's County located near the intersection of MD 410 and Route 1.

## **4. Subcommittee Reports, Updates, and Recommendations:**

**- Sidewalks-Pedestrian Network Assessment – Ramin Assa:** introduced a proposal to select two communities to do a pilot study to assess the existing and missing sidewalks and crosswalks. The purpose of the study is to define the existing pedestrian network, the deficiencies in that network, and prioritize the needed improvements to enhance safe pedestrian access. Assa was most familiar with East Bethesda, describing the issues there. Steve Friedman asked what affect BRAC

had on this community and whether that played into the selection process. Assa stated, “absolutely.” Reemberto Rodriguez said he felt Montgomery Hills was an ideal neighborhood: a residential area adjoining a commercial area. Resources could be effectively targeted there. Dunkel expressed concern that both he and Assa lived in East Bethesda. Friedman said he would support selecting East Bethesda because of the population density there.

**MOTION: A motion was moved and seconded to select East Bethesda and Montgomery Hills as the two neighborhoods to conduct a pilot study to assess pedestrian networks and identify needed improvements. The motion passed unanimously.**

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Adam Ortiz resumed his presentation [interrupted by the fire alarm and temporary evacuation]. Ortiz described Edmonston as a working class, diverse community of 1,400 residents. Flooding was a problem. Screw pumps were installed to correct the problem – issue of streets was addressed in context to the drainage improvements. There were a myriad of issues: canopy trees were not present; street lighting was poor; sidewalks were not ADA compliant; no bike lanes; inadequate storm water drainage.

A plan was created to improve Decatur Street, Edmonstons’ main street, turning it into a Green Street. AARA funding was used for the project; total project cost was just under \$1.5 million. Components included: Install native large canopy trees; Replace lights with LED high efficiency lighting; Construct ADA compliant sidewalks; Construct dedicated bike lanes; and Use natural bio-retention for storm water.

Ortiz showed slides of the storm water retention features. Permeable pavement was incorporated into the design. Jack Strausman asked about utility poles in the plan - - they seemed to be missing. Ortiz said that the removal of utility poles had to be taken out of the project because of the cost of \$3,500 dollar per utility pole. Migdall and Friedman noted that the bike lanes were too narrow; Ortiz replied it was what could be done with the space they had. Bump outs were alternated to create a chicane effect. Lanes were narrowed to 10 feet. LED lighting for Edmonston street lights saved 20% in electricity costs. Lights are brighter too.

#### **5. New Business/Committee Comments:**

**November Meeting in Silver Spring:** Will be held in Silver Spring on November 3 at 7:00 in the Silver Spring Civic Center.

**Bicycles for January Meeting:** Mack proposed focusing on bicycle issues for the January meeting – due in part to the addition to our committee’s name: the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBTSAC.) Mack asked Friedman to help organize that meeting and invite appropriate people. Bike racks at schools can also be discussed.

**Bikes on sidewalks** – many variations to what is legal. Is some education needed? How should the committee proceed knowing this is a problem for cyclists? WABA has a chart online that is not yet correct. This will be followed up on in the January meeting. Gail Tait-Nouri will attend. Share the road signs will also be discussed.

**Ride Along is scheduled for October.**

Mack shared his photos from his **Baltic Cruise of the bicycle features** he observed.

**International Walk to School Day is October 5, 2011.** A Press Event is scheduled at Captain Daly Elementary School in Germantown.

**Meeting adjourned:** 9:48 pm